

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 03714 200628Z
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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 3714

EXDIS (HANDLE AS NODIS)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, USC, PBOR, IS, LE, SY, XF

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: WEIZMAN UNLOADS

1. SUMMARY: DURING A CONVERSATION THIS MORNING AT THE AIRPORT DEPARTURE CEREMONY FOR PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AN EXTREMELY FRUSTRATED AND BEWILDERED WEIZMAN LET LOOSE WITH (1) A TIRADE ABOUT THE USELESSNESS OF THE UN IN ANY ROLE WHATSOEVER AND WHEREVER, (2) THE WEAKNESS OF HIS PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION, AND (3) "THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE US, ISRAEL AND SYRIA TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF SOUTH LEBANON." HE ALSO REVEALED THE ABORTIVE GOI PROPOSAL FOR A SOUTH LEBANON SOLUTION WHICH BEGIN HAD WANTED DAYAN TO PRESENT IN WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY

2. IN A NOISY LOD AIRPORT WAITING ROOM DURING A FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED CONVERSATION, A STORMY, FRUSTRATED, AND OCCASIONALLY ARROGANT WEIZMAN GRASPED FOR STRAWS IN HIS ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE ME THAT THE ISRAELI INCURSION INTO SOUTH LEBANON HAD CREATED "EXACTLY THE SITUATION WHICH WE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 03714 200628Z

BOTH HAVE WANTED FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS." WEIZMAN I CONVINCED THAT ANY DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE INTRODUCTION OF UN TROOPS INTO SOUTH LEBANON IS A TOTAL WASTE OF TIME. HE HEAPED SCORN AND RIDICULE UPON THE UN, THE SECRETARY GENERAL, AND SIILASVUO. WHEN I TRIED TO PERSUADE HIM THAT WHAT WE ARE PUSHING FOR IS A FORCE WITH CLOUT AND THE ORDERS

TO ENFORCE SECURITY IN THE REGION, HE BRUSHED MY REMARKS ASIDE ASSERTING THAT NO UN FORCE WOULD EVER GET SUCH A CHARTER.

3. DURING HIS INITIAL CONVERSATION AND OTHER QUICK BITS AND PIECES OF TALK WHILE MINGLING WITH THE DEPARTURE CROWD, WEIZMAN INSISTED THAT WHAT HAD BEEN CREATED WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE US, ISRAEL AND SYRIA TO SIT DOWN TOGETHER (OR APART WITH US IN THE MIDDLE) TO NEGOTIATE A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE SEEMS SOMEHOW TO HAVE PERSUADED HIMSELF THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT AN ISRAELI PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON FOR THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE TO TRAIN AND INSERT LEBANESE FORCE INTO THE AREA. I TOLD HIM HE WAS ENGAGING IN WISHFUL THINKING, THAT THE SYRIANS WERE IN NO MOOD TO BLESS AND IDF PRESENCE IN LEBANON. BUT I SAID THE SYRIANS APPEARED AMENABLE TO THE PRESENCE OF A UN FORCE WHILE PREPARATIONS WERE MADE FOR TURNING OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURITY OF THE AREA TO LEBANESE ARMY. WEIZMAN ASKED THAT WE TALK TO THE SYRIANS AND EXPLAIN TO THEM THAT ISRAEL HAS NO INTENTION OF STAYING IN SOUTH LEBANON. IT WANTS TO GET OUT JUST AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, BUT BEFORE THAT HAPPENS MEASURES MUST BE FOUND TO GUARANTEE THE SECURITY OF NORTHERN ISRAEL FROM PALESTINIAN ROCKETS AND ARTILLERY. IN HIS VIEW THE ONLY GUARANTEE (WHICH HE ADMITTED IS NOT WORKING VERY WELL) AT THIS TIME IS THE IDF ON THE GROUND. I COUNTERED WITH THE ARGUMENT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TEL AV 03714 200628Z

THAT SO LONG AS THE IDF REMAINS HE CAN BE SURE ROCKETS AND ARTILLERY WILL CONTINUE TO RAIN ON NORTHERN ISRAEL.

4. WEIZMAN ADMITTED TO COL. WILLIAMS AND ME THAT THE IDF HAS BEEN SURPRISED BY THE STRENGTH OF THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE. HE SAID HE HAD THOUGHT THEY WOULD SIMPLY DISAPPEAR WITHOUT PUTTING UP MUCH OF A FIGHT. THE OPPOSITE HAD BEEN TRUE. HE ALSO CONFIRMED OUR PREVIOUS ASSUMPTION THAT THE REASON THE IDF HAD STOPPED AT A TEN KILOMETER LINE WAS BECAUSE THE GOI HAD CONCLUDED IT WOULD NOT ENCOUNTER MUCH INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM IF THE INCURSION WAS OF A LIMITED NATURE. HE SEEMS BEWILDERED THAT THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE. HE ALSO TOLD US THAT THE CONTINUATION OF ARTILLERY AND ROCKETS INTO NORTHERN ISRAEL IS FORCING THE IDF TO MOVE FURTHER NORTH TOWARD THE LITANI. (CHIEF OF STAFF GUR'S AIDE, OBVIOUSLY JUST AS TIRED AS HIS BOSS, TOLD ARMA THAT "THINGS COULD BE GOING MUCH BETTER.")

5. WEIZMAN ALSO REFERRED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE NEGOTIATIONS GOING BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL. POINTING HIS THUMB OVER HIS SHOULDER IN THE DIRECTION OF THE

PRIME MINISTER, HE SAID "SADAT AND THAT MAN (BEGIN) NEED HELP--GOOD KNOWS HE (BEGIN) NEEDS IT." WEIZMAN SAID HE WAS SENDING A MESSAGE TODAY TO GAMASY IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING ON AT LEAST A PERSONAL BASIS.

6. WEIZMAN SAID THE GOI PLAN FOR SOUTH LEBANON WHICH DAYAN NOW REFUSES TO DISCUSS IN WASHINGTON (BEGIN PRE-SUMABLY WILL) INVOLVES HAVING THE ISRAELIS REMAIN IN SOUTH LEBANON FOR THE NEXT TWO TO THREE MONTHS WHILE TRAINING A FORCE OF ABOUT 1500 CHRISTIAN AND SHIA LEBANESE. THIS LEBANESE FORCE, UNDER THE BLAKET OF THE LEBANESE ARMY, WOULD THEN BE INTRODUCED IN THE AREA, PROVIDING A BUFFER SIMILAR TO THAT PROPOSED BY THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT. WHEN ASKED IF HE HONESTLY THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A FORCE OF SUFFICIENT STRENGTH TO KEEP THE PALESTINIANS OUT, HE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 TEL AV 03714 200628Z

SAID YES, REMINDING ME IT WOULD BE BACKED UP BY ISRAELI TANKS, GUNS AND INFANTRY POISED ON THE BORDER. HE SAID HE DID NOT CARE WHO TRAINED THIS FORCE - "YOU CAN TRAIN THEM IF YOU WANT TO"- AND HE REPEATED TIME AND AGAIN HE THOUGHT THE SYRIANS COULD BE PERSUADED TO GO ALONG WITH SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT. I TOLD HIM THAT I THOUGHT HE WAS BEING TOTALLY UNREALISTIC, BUT ALL MY EFFORTS TO DISSUADE HIM APPEARED TO FALL ON DEAF EARS.

7. WEIZMAN WAS IN AS EMOTIONAL AND UNOBJECTIVE MOOD AS I HAVE EVER SEEN HIM. THE PRESSURES ON HIM ARE TAKING THEIR TOLL. I AM CERTAIN HE REALIZES HE IS BEING SUCKED EVER DEEPER INTO A MILITARY AND POLITICAL QUAGMIRE, BUT HIS DILEMMA IS TO FIND A WAY OUT WITHOUT APPEARING TO HAVE BEEN WRONG IN GOING INTO SOUTH LEBANON WITH AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

8. FINAL NOTE: BEGIN ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AS WE WERE TALKING. HE GREETED WEIZMAN EFFUSIVELY. WEIZMAN'S RESPONSE HAD ALL THE ENTHUSIASM OF A DEAD COD FISH.
VIETS

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

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